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Intangible Cultural Heritage

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**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Sixteenth session
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
13 to 18 December 2021**

Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda:

Report of the non-governmental organizations forum

Summary

The present document brings to the attention of the Committee the report by the ICH NGO Forum on its activities in 2020-2021, following the decision of the Committee at its fifteenth session to examine this report under a stand-alone agenda item for the second consecutive year (Decision [15.COM 6](#)).

Decision required: paragraph 3

1. The Committee examined the first report by the non-governmental organizations forum at its fifteenth session under a stand-alone agenda item, following its decision at the previous session (Decision [14.COM 15](#)). While expressing its appreciation for the contributions made to support the work of the Committee and taking note of the activities reported, the Committee decided to examine the report of the forum once again as a separate item of the provisional agenda of its sixteenth session (Decision [15.COM 6](#)).
 2. The annex to the present document contains the report submitted by the ICH NGO Forum with an overview of the organizational development of the Forum, a summary of the Forum's activities for 2020-2021 and a set of pathways for the Forum's development, which includes a proposal of advisory functions that the ICH NGO Forum offers to perform in the implementation of the Convention.
1. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 16.COM 9

The Committee,

1. Having examined document LHE/21/16.COM/9 and its annex,
2. Recalling Decisions [14.COM 15](#) and [15.COM 6](#),
3. Acknowledges the efforts by the ICH NGO Forum to enhance its organizational capacity in coordinating the work of accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which bring extensive and highly diverse safeguarding experiences and expertise to the 2003 Convention;
4. Appreciates the increased participation of accredited NGOs in the sessions of the Committee and the useful role played by the ICH NGO Forum in providing capacity-building to newly accredited NGOs in understanding the work of the Committee;
5. Notes with appreciation the establishment by the ICH NGO Forum of a new thematic working group dedicated to increasing the number of accredited NGOs in underrepresented regions and encourages the Forum to pursue its efforts in this direction;
6. Takes note of the ongoing collaboration between the ICH NGO Forum and the Secretariat to conduct a mapping of the domains of competencies of accredited NGOs in response to its Decision [14.COM 15](#);
7. Welcomes the readiness demonstrated by the ICH NGO Forum to assume an enhanced advisory role to the Committee;
8. Further encourages States Parties to consider the possibility of providing financial support for the work of the ICH NGO Forum through the modality of their choice;
9. Decides to include a separate item on the 'Report of the non-governmental organizations forum' on the provisional agenda of its seventeenth session.

ANNEX

REPORT OF THE ICH NGO FORUM (2021)

The ICH NGO Forum is grateful for the support of the Committee, States Parties and the Secretariat for the opportunity to present this annual report and suggest how NGOs might expand their involvement with the Convention. The Forum now federates 193 accredited NGOs deeply grounded in communities, groups and individuals actively engaged in safeguarding ICH. Since its foundation in 2009-10, it has become the principal platform for communication, networking, exchange and cooperation among accredited NGOs safeguarding ICH on national, regional and international levels. The Forum brings to the Convention extensive and highly diverse safeguarding experiences and expertise. This report provides an overview of the development of the NGO accreditation process along with the creation and evolution of the Forum. It summarizes activities and initiatives undertaken in 2020-2021, suggests pathways for the Forum's organizational development and proposes potential new advisory functions for the Forum.

I. Background to the Accreditation of NGOs under the 2003 Convention

During the drafting of the 2003 Convention, which was adapted from the model of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, concern was expressed about the lack of an international NGO for ICH equivalent to ICOMOS or IUCN. The need for such an NGO was seen as especially important given the great diversity of ICH elements and bearer communities. The drafting of Article 9(1), which allows for the accreditation of NGOs "to act in an advisory capacity to the Committee", was motivated in part by the hope that it would lead to the development of a global NGO community engaged in safeguarding ICH. The key role that NGOs could play as a "vehicle for representation" of cultural communities, groups and individuals at the intergovernmental level was acknowledged at this time by Member States. Importantly, in order to avoid the dominance of one or two large international NGOs, accreditation under the 2003 Convention (as set out in the Operational Directives) was made possible for all NGOs "with recognized competence" in the field of ICH.

This approach has resulted in wide diversity among accredited NGOs, which represents a highly significant and distinctive feature of the ICH NGO Forum, setting it apart from many large international NGOs that operate within the framework of other international treaties. Its diversity, as recognized from the inception of the Convention, is essential for the ICH NGO Forum to be able to respond to the multi-dimensional nature of intangible cultural heritage and its actors. This approach is in line with the increasing outreach to non-state actors in international law-making generally, including international cultural heritage governance. This is also reflected in Article 11(b) of the Convention, which calls on States Parties to involve "relevant" NGOs in the identification and definition of the various ICH elements present on their territory, recognizing that application of the participatory approach of Article 15 can be greatly enhanced by NGO involvement. In addition to local, national and regional NGOs which help to turn the Convention's obligations into concrete action on the ground, a smaller group of NGOs accredited to act in an advisory capacity to the Committee support the Convention at the international level.

The ICH NGO Forum is a membership organization created through the initiative of multiple NGOs that federates all NGOs accredited under the 2003 Convention. This places it in an unparalleled position to reach the 193 accredited NGOs located across all six regions of UNESCO along with international NGOs. The Forum facilitates collaboration and contributes to the development of strong and reliable working relationships among accredited NGOs and with other ICH stakeholders. It has a clear organizational structure with a Steering Committee comprising seven democratically elected members who represent the six electoral regions and the International NGOs. The Steering Committee members all possess detailed and in-depth knowledge of the accreditation system as well as experience participating in the Convention's intergovernmental meetings. They also combine deep and diverse knowledge and experiences of the development, drafting and implementation of the 2003 Convention as well as safeguarding ICH on the ground in all of the different regions of the world.

The Forum's membership ranges from community-based organizations, to larger NGOs which support national-level implementation of the 2003 Convention and policy development. Through field research they inventory and document intangible cultural practices within local contexts. Their mix of different types of expertise and experience in the field, grassroots presence in their local society, and close relationships with bearer communities accords them a unique position in safeguarding ICH. It equips them to sustain working relationships based on mutual trust, a key element for any sustainable implementation of the Convention. This is an important added value that the NGO Forum is in a position to leverage in support of the efforts of the States Parties and the Secretariat in implementing the 2003 Convention. Since many accredited NGOs play a central role in mediating between various actors and stakeholders at different levels of heritage governance, this makes them key strategic partners for States Parties in the application of the participatory principle promoted by the 2003 Convention. Like any type of NGO, those engaged with ICH represent a third sphere apart from government (including intergovernmental entities) and the corporate sector, positioning them directly within civil society and thus ideally equipped to bring safeguarding programmes into action with comprehensive community engagement.

The Forum is acutely aware that NGOs from developing countries remain underrepresented, despite the flexibility of the accreditation criteria. This is a challenge that the ICH NGO Forum is actively addressing through efforts to involve NGOs from geographically underrepresented regions in all of its activities, recruiting members from these regions in all of its working groups and developing plans for capacity-building programmes. A working group created in late 2020 is specifically dedicated to creating initiatives for increasing the number of NGO in underrepresented regions.

Accredited NGOs attend the sessions of the statutory organs of the 2003 Convention, including the meetings of the Committee, either in an advisory capacity or as observers. Committee meetings represent the primary engagement of most accredited NGOs with the Convention at the intergovernmental level, and a number of accredited NGOs participate in them in regularly increasing numbers. Since the creation of the Steering Committee, their participation has gone up from approximately 50 in 2015 to more than 80 in 2020. Beginning in 2009, the Forum delivered a statement at the annual meetings of the Committee and, since 2020, a report from the NGO Forum has been presented and discussed at Committee sessions. Since 2012, it has also organized an NGO symposium alongside the Committee sessions to address particular issues, including the role of NGOs in implementing the Convention, ICH in cities, community-driven ICH tourism and the ongoing

reform of the listing mechanism. The sessions held at the time of the Committee meeting also help in defining strategies for the implementation of the Convention, at both international and national levels.

Representatives of accredited NGOs have fulfilled advisory functions as members of the evaluation body since 2010 and they also serve as expert members of governmental delegations to meetings of the statutory bodies. The Forum also has an informal but effective channel of communication with the Secretariat via its Steering Committee, including periodic virtual meetings begun in 2020-2021.

Through the Forum and its processes for discussion and co-operation, accredited NGOs can co-ordinate their efforts, follow up on developments within the Convention and design projects consistent with the Committee's priorities. The Forum has established standing working groups of which there are currently seven focusing on issues of current importance for implementing the Convention. They include:

- Alternate and lighter ways of sharing safeguarding experiences
- Gender and intellectual property
- The overall results framework
- ICH NGOs and ethics
- ICH NGOs and research
- Information and communication technologies
- ———More balanced geographical representation of NGOs

The Forum shares news and information among its members and with a wider public through its [website](#), Facebook page, and other social media platforms and, since 2012, through its online publication *#HeritageAlive* which disseminates NGOs' ICH safeguarding experiences. These communication platforms are frequently utilized by other partners and stakeholders in the 2003 Convention, including Category II Centres and States Parties.

The role of accredited NGOs within the Convention is not yet fully defined, and the interpretation of Article 9 is evolving. This provides an opportunity for the Committee to find ways in which the unique and privileged position of the ICH NGO Forum and its undoubted resources can better be leveraged for an improved implementation of the Convention at all levels. It also offers the States Parties a means to include a wider number of voices in the Convention's implementation in the spirit of Articles 9, 11(b) and 15.

The reflection by the Committee on NGO participation in the Convention initiated in 2017 presented the possibility of defining a more diversified range of advisory functions for NGOs, which we believe would be of benefit for all sides. Today's increased intensive discussions on potential new functions and roles for the ICH NGO Forum speak to how stakeholders are able to best adapt a strategy for addressing the growing challenges of the sustainable implementation of the 2003 Convention. They clearly speak to the question as to how the ICH NGO Forum can contribute to moving forward in the pursuit of our shared common goals, as a source of inspiration rather than tension.

II. Projects, accomplishments, and ongoing work in 2020-2021

The Steering Committee of the ICH NGO Forum has committed to building a stronger and more effective organization for the benefit of all NGOs as well as the Intergovernmental Committee and the

Living Heritage Entity in 2020-2021. In order to accomplish this goal, it has undertaken a series of new projects and actions since December of 2020.

Activities organized at the Intergovernmental Committee meeting in 2020 (15.COM)

The Intergovernmental Committee meetings are always a time of intense discussion, exchange and decision making for the Forum. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 15.COM had to be held virtually and the ICH NGO Forum adapted to this new format resourcefully in light of emerging challenges and advantages. We turned the challenge of involving a far-flung membership spread across time zones worldwide into an opportunity to become more inclusive and involve a larger number of our members. The number of participants surpassed previous years, including a number of members who had not attended in-person Committee meetings. A second major challenge was providing orientation to newly accredited NGOs through a virtual platform. Two welcome sessions for newcomers were organized online a week prior to the meeting on December 2, one in English and the other in French. These sessions explained the workings of the intergovernmental Committee meeting, introduced the various actors included in the meeting and explained how accredited NGOs can best participate in their first Committee meeting.

The Intergovernmental Committee meeting is also a time to elect new members for a two-year term to the Steering Committee. Every year elections are organized by an Electoral Board, nominated by the Steering Committee after a call for applications. The Electoral Board was composed of three members from three different electoral regions: Western Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. Elections were held to fill four of the seven seats of the Steering Committee: Western Europe and North America, Africa, Asia-Pacific and an International NGO. Candidates were invited to submit their CV's and a short video, which were made available on the Forum website (www.ichngoforum.org). Candidates were also able to present a brief statement and share a PowerPoint of their platform. Out of the total of 88 NGOs that requested an online link to vote, 76 actually voted during the 24-hour poll and the election was held smoothly.

The four new members elected to the Steering Committee were: Mrs. Janet Blake, Persian Garden Institute for Living Heritage (Islamic Republic of Iran), to represent Asia and the Pacific; Mr. Butholezwe Kgosi Nyathi, Amagugu International Heritage Centre (Zimbabwe), to represent Africa; Mr. Laurier Turgeon, l'Association canadienne d'ethnologie et de folklore (Canada) (Secretary), to represent Western Europe and North America; and Mr. Robert Baron, International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (Treasurer), to represent the International NGOs. They joined the three other members elected to the Steering Committee the previous year: Mr. Jorge Gustavo Caicedo, La Enciclopedia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial (Mexico) (President); Mrs. Reme Sakr, Syria Trust for Development (Syria) (Vice-president) representing the Arab States; and Mr. Kaloyan Nikolov, European Association of Folklore Festivals (Bulgaria) representing Eastern Europe. Since Mr. Kgosi Nyathi was unable to attend Steering Committee meetings he was replaced in the spring by Mr. Sekou Berte of the Mali Cultural Heritage Agency, following the Forum's established procedure for replacing a Steering Committee member.

A symposium is held every year to deal with current and pressing ICH issues. The 2020 symposium, organized by the working group on research, was dedicated to studying the impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on tourism and examining approaches for building more sustainable and regenerative forms

of tourism post-pandemic. Presentations were made by Albert van der Zeijden, Dutch Centre for Intangible Culture Heritage; Robert Baron, International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF); David Gómez Manrique, Technical coordinator of CRESPIAL; Anabela Correia, Director of Tourism Services at the INATEL Foundation (Portugal); Ananya Bhattacharya, Contact Base (India); and Martha Fleurant and Jorijn Neyrinck, Werkplaats Immaterieel Erfgoed (Belgium).

The Intergovernmental Committee meetings also provide an opportunity for the working groups to meet, reflect upon past projects and organize their agendas for the year to come. During their meeting, the working group on the overall results framework shared how NGOs monitor the indicators and identify good practices for measuring, while also discussing what needs to be measured but is not currently measured. The working group on ethics discussed article 21 of the Forum's By-laws and the working group on research discussed and adopted a mission statement, board structure and work plan. The working group on the geographical imbalance of NGOs held their first meeting, which established objectives and priorities. The #heritageAlive online journal held a meeting to discuss the preparation of their next publication in collaboration with the centre ICHCAP on traditional musical instruments.

The Forum's General Assembly, held on December 16, enabled members to share their work and collaborations developed during the past year, and to introduce the newly elected Steering Committee members. The session was led by the former members of the Steering Committee, Mrs Meg Nömgård, The Storytelling Network of Kronoberg (Sweden) (President); Mrs Naila Ceribašić, International Council for Traditional Music (Secretary); Mr. Donghwan Choi, Center for Intangible Cultural Studies (Republic of Korea) (Treasurer). We wish to thank and recognize their hard work, dedication and determination to help build a stronger, more efficient, more effective, more inclusive and transparent organization.

The Symposium, online presentations of the candidates and the General Assembly had interpretation services to French, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Conseil québécois du patrimoine vivant (Canada), a member of the Forum.

Increasing the participation of NGOs from underrepresented regions

One of the primary objectives of the Steering Committee and the Forum this year has been to increase the number of accredited NGOs from underrepresented regions and the participation from all regions in the Forum. Participation of NGOs in the activities organized by the Forum during the Intergovernmental Committee meetings grew over the last few years, from 47 NGOs in 2016, to 54 in 2017, to 63 in 2018, to 68 in 2019, and to 86 in 2020. Since the creation of the NGO Forum Steering Committee in 2015, active participation in the meetings has gone from about one quarter to almost half of the total number of 193 accredited NGOs. The online format of the meeting in 2020 certainly contributed to the sharp jump in participation last year. However, it must be pointed out that this increase is part of a longer trend. There has indeed been a steady increase in numbers over the last five years due to: 1) better knowledge of the Forum; 2) the increased number of services rendered to NGOs (such as capacity building workshops, symposiums at the committee meetings as well as during the year, a permanently accessible and actively managed website, and financial support); 3) a more elaborate and stronger organizational structure with the creation of the Steering Committee, by-laws, code of ethics and yearly elections; 4) a heightened sense of belonging to the Forum. Today,

most NGOs regard the Forum as the central place to network, present their work, acquire information, and share ideas about skills in the safeguarding of ICH. They consider it as their own, a second home in the ICH world along with the NGO with which they are primarily affiliated.

A number of concrete actions were taken this year to encourage participation in the Forum and expand the number of accredited NGOs in regions that are underrepresented. Slightly over half of the accredited NGOs come from Electoral Region I, Western Europe and North America. Although there is fairly good representation from Eastern Europe and the Asia and the Pacific regions, three regions remain seriously underrepresented: Africa (21 NGOs), Latin America and Caribbean (10) and Arab States (9). A welcome letter was sent to all of the newly accredited NGOs in January 2021 to explain the nature of the Forum, to present the website and to encourage their participation in the activities of the Forum. The welcoming letter was appreciated as many NGOs responded favourably to it. The Working Group on Under-Represented regions held two meetings this year (27 April and 18 June) to encourage NGOs from these regions to participate more actively and discuss new approaches to expanding accreditation from these regions. The Steering Committee sent letters specifically to NGOs from underrepresented regions to participate in the working groups and in the Electoral Board. These efforts have paid off. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 21 of the By-laws concerned with establishing conflict of interest policies and protocols, is made up of members from all six electoral regions, ensuring full geographical representation. The call for members to sit on the Electoral Board has for the first time received applications from Africa and Eastern Europe. In the past, applications came only from Western Europe and North America (group I), Arab States (group Vb), and Asia and the Pacific (group IV). Furthermore, the Steering Committee has prioritized the NGOs from underrepresented regions (Arab States, Africa, Latin America and Caribbean) in its survey aimed at mapping the domains of expertise of NGOs, which is discussed in a subsequent section of this report. These are all tangible signs of the expanding participation of NGOs.

Measures to raise the effectiveness of the Working Groups

The working groups have become a crucial part of the work of the Forum and could be even more instrumental if better organized and structured. Working groups have been created spontaneously and their governance has been largely autonomous. Some working groups are very active and well-structured; others are less active and loosely structured. The Steering Committee has reached out to collaborate more closely with the working groups and assist them in becoming better organized and more efficient. They have been encouraged to prepare annual reports of their activities, create clear mission statements and define the Chair's terms and duration of office. There is also a need to create Ad Hoc Working Groups to respond to strategic and pressing issues. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 21 of the By-laws was created this year to deal with a specific topic; this approach has proven to be very effective. The Steering Committee plans to meet with the working groups during the Committee meeting this year to explore ways to work more closely and efficiently with them.

Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 21 of the By-laws

An Ad Hoc Working Group was established to provide a recommendation to the Forum regarding Article 21 of the By-laws. This article states that "Members of the official delegation of a State Party may not be elected to the Steering Committee. If a member of the Steering Committee becomes a member of an official delegation of a State Party in the course of her or his service in the Steering

Committee, membership in the Steering Committee will be terminated.” It was tabled at the Forum’s General Assembly alongside the 14.COM and was not adopted as part of the By-laws because it raised concerns among a number of members. Participants in the meeting felt that further thought and discussion should be devoted to this article. Although it was drafted to avoid possible conflicts of interest related to these dual affiliations, members from underrepresented regions expressed serious concerns because some countries are not able to send more than one delegate to the meetings and these delegates may also represent NGOs. They can only send one delegate for reasons which include financial constraints as well as other emerging issues, such as natural disasters, sanctions and political instability. For some, such dual affiliations are not perceived as presenting a conflict of interest, but are rather viewed as an asset, enabling better communication between States Parties and the Steering Committee.

The Ad hoc Working Group on Article 21 is comprised of one accredited NGO representing each electoral group. They were charged to conduct broad consultations amongst all accredited NGOs and draft a working document on its results to be distributed prior to the next GA. They prepared a background note describing what conflicts of interest consist of, discussing practices employed to determine when a conflict of interest arises, and suggesting possible scenarios for Article 21. A survey was launched in mid-October to elicit the views of as many NGO members as possible so as to best inform the decision which will be taken at the next General Assembly.

Working Group on Research

Made up of over 30 members, the Working Group on Research has dedicated much of its time to the development of a Mission Statement presented, revised, and approved in the margin of the 15.COM and the subsequent 2021 Action Plan. Both documents are available on the website of the ICH NGO Forum. The Action Plan established two main objectives for 2021: the creation of a toolkit on Sustainable Tourism and the organization of a conference on ICH and the environment. Unfortunately, after the sudden death of Albert van der Zeijden, the main coordinator of the Working Group, the Action Plan was modified, and the focus was given to the Tourism Toolkit. This was developed by Martha Fleurant and Jorijn Neyrinck of Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed, Belgium, with the collaboration of Albert van der Zeijden and Martín Andrade Pérez. The preliminary document was completed and presented to the Steering Committee in May 2021. Following their comments, the document is in a process of evaluation by two experts in ICH and tourism. The final document is projected to be presented and launched alongside the 16.COM, in December 2021 as a project of the Working Group on Research.

Working Group for more Balanced Geographical Representation of Accredited NGOs

The Working Group for more Balanced Geographical Representation of Accredited NGOs was established in December 2020 during 15.COM. It is co-chaired by Matti Hakamäki, Finnish Folk Music Institute (Finland) and Cholponai U-G, Aigine Cultural Research Center (Kyrgyzstan). Prior to its first meeting, at 15.COM, a background note was prepared on the subject and a short online survey was carried out to have a better idea of the problem and to reflect upon it efficiently. Other online working group meetings were held in April and June 2021, hosting presentations by different NGOs about the local and regional challenges that accredited NGOs face and confront. The working group is currently creating capacity building materials in order to provide practical information to NGOs in the

underrepresented countries. A Mission Statement of the working group will be prepared and approved alongside the 16.COM.

#HeritageAlive 2021

Founded in 2012, the journal #HeritageAlive shares NGOs' experiences from the field. Its editorial board comprises colleagues from NGOs in countries around the world, including Canada, the Netherlands, Uganda, Norway, India and Korea. Eivind Falk, of the Norwegian Crafts Institute, is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of this annual journal. Since 2017, #HeritageAlive has cooperated with ICHCAP, in the publication of the journal and in bringing its accounts of various aspects of ICH to communities and practitioners engaged in safeguarding.

The 2021 issue of #HeritageAlive includes 14 articles dealing with the making and playing of traditional musical instruments. The Editorial Board received 31 submissions this year and was sorry only to have room to publish 14 of them in the current issue. The published articles come from all over the world and demonstrate a rich variety of musical traditions. Rather than solely presenting an ICH element, the articles dwell on challenges, methodology, and experiences in safeguarding and transmitting elements, in the spirit of the 2003 Convention, emphasizing the elements' social and cultural functions for a group or a community. *Musical Instruments -sharing experiences from the field* will be presented in the margin of the 16.COM. The publication will also contain musical samples that can be downloaded online, so readers can be introduced not just to the text, but also to the music.

Participation in the Meeting on the European Network of Focal Points for the 2003 Convention

Kaloyan Nikolov represented the Steering Committee at the meeting on May 25th organized by the European Network of Focal Points for the 2003 Convention (ENFP) which was initiated by the UNESCO Group 1 and 2 countries. The proposal was launched during the UNESCO training on periodic reporting by focal points in Italy and Finland. This new network aims to share ideas and good practices, encourage dialogue, and exchange expertise in order to find better and innovative ways for safeguarding ICH in European countries. The Steering Committee plans to invite the Network to present their work at the Forum meeting in December.

ICOMOS ICH Charter

The ICOMOS Scientific Committee on ICH has drafted a Charter on Intangible Cultural Heritage. It aims to provide a sound basis in terms of principles and guidance for how ICH relates to place and place-based practices, calling for an understanding of the interdependency of tangible and intangible heritage. The Charter is intended to strengthen the work of ICOMOS and its members in this domain. It would become part of the suite of policies and guidance that would be used by ICOMOS and its members to include ICH in the management of World Heritage Sites as well as heritage sites in general. The Charter underlines the similarities between the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003. However, it fails to acknowledge essential differences between ICH as defined in the ICH Convention, and tangible heritage.

The Steering Committee members have devoted extensive attention to the Charter and are providing comments and suggested revisions to ICOMOS. They are particularly concerned about: 1) the absence of references to inventorying of ICH on heritage sites, which is a key element of the 2003

Convention; 2) the assumption that ICH is always linked to physical spaces while the existence or enactment of numerous elements of intangible cultural heritage does not depend upon a specific space, such as many oral traditions or the heritage that diaspora communities bring with them into new contexts and societies; 3) reference to such concepts as 'authenticity', 'integrity', 'conservation' and 'maintenance' of ICH, which have distinctive meanings for tangible heritage that are not shared by ICH; 4) neglecting adequate consideration of living heritage as continuously evolving; 5) a glossary that does not take into account the definition of 'safeguarding', as provided in Article 2.3 of the 2003 Convention; 6) overlooking the key roles of communities in defining their ICH and mitigating threats to it, as pointed out in the 'Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage' and the 'Operational Principles and Modalities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies'; and (7) the insistence on the conservation of physical spaces rather than an emphasis on safeguarding aimed at ensuring the viability of living heritage. Comments have been addressed to the ICOMOS ICH Scientific Committee in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue. We look forward to engaging with ICOMOS about our shared interests as well as our concerns. While the Forum welcomes the growing recognition of the importance of ICH in the protection of monuments, architecture and material culture, it will insist that the distinctive features of ICH and tangible heritage be acknowledged and recognized, and we hope to work together with ICOMOS in a manner that respects our distinctive domains of expertise and engagement.

Participation in the open-ended intergovernmental meetings on the listing mechanisms (8-9 July and 9-10 September 2021)

The members of the Steering Committee participated actively in the two meetings dedicated to the listing mechanisms (8-9 July and 9-10 September 2021). A statement was presented by the Steering Committee. Excerpts of the statement are presented below:

'The roles that accredited NGOs can play within the 2003 Convention and its implementation at the international level are not yet fully defined and are still evolving. This presents an opportunity for the Committee to introduce new opportunities for NGOs to engage with the 2003 Convention. It also offers a way for States Parties to include a wider number of voices in the Convention's implementation in the spirit of Articles 9, 11(b) and 15.

The 2003 Convention is currently in a period of growth, while the resources supporting the Convention are not. We strongly believe this provides an opportunity in which an expanded range of advisory functions for accredited NGOs within the 2003 Convention can be defined, as an existing and available option that could address the increasing workload, and limited resources of the Secretariat, which would be of benefit for all sides, including States Parties to the Convention.

Some of the ways in which accredited NGOs could be more deeply involved in the listing mechanism, may include:

- Providing expertise in a wide range of areas, in particular based on their geographical and ICH-based expertise
- Providing information on the status of and impacts of safeguarding on inscribed elements, drawing on the informed cultural knowledge and grassroots experience of its members
- Conducting field visits and providing advisory services including the follow up on the listed elements with advice for the Secretariat and the States Parties on actions to be taken

- Supporting the evaluation process being undertaken by the Evaluation Body, beyond the membership of six representatives from six accredited NGOs, including providing additional information as requested by the Body
- Working collaboratively and as a bridge between governments, intergovernmental actors, bearer communities and related civil society organizations.

Finally, we wish to recall that the NGO Forum, a well-established body with a clear organizational structure and legal status, already plays a role in the implementation of the Convention at the international level, especially through membership of the Evaluation Body, and is ready and willing to expand that role in order to enhance this work.'

Mapping of the domains of competencies of the accredited NGOs

The Steering Committee responded to the Call for Expressions of Interest sent by the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention in July to map the domains of competencies of accredited NGOs and was selected to take on this project. Working closely with the Living Heritage Entity, the Steering Committee of the ICH NGO Forum is currently in the process of carrying out surveys and preparing the reports, guidelines, and vocabularies as required by the Call for Expressions of Interest. In order to proceed efficiently and to follow the proper research protocols for this type of project, the work plan entails: 1) reading all of the pertinent documentation, including the applications for accreditation; 2) disseminating an online questionnaire to all NGOs; 3) conducting one-to-one interviews with 64 accredited NGOs, giving priority to those from underrepresented regions; 4) drawing up a list of vocabularies defining the expertise of the NGOs from the surveys; 5) drafting a two-page guideline for the indexation of the vocabularies; 6) writing short texts to illustrate the expertise of each NGO interviewed, which will be incorporated in an infographic for each of these NGOs; 7) preparing a 20 page report presenting the results of the surveys, assessing the needs of NGOs and providing recommendations for sharing expertise in domains of competency, providing new services for NGOs and creating relevant capacity building initiatives; and 8) proposing a review of Form ICH-09 for accreditation and Form ICH-08 for reporting.

The survey and the one-to-one interviews have been carried out on a regional basis according to the regions represented by each Steering Committee member and the languages spoken in the different countries of origin of the surveyed NGOs. The online survey was sent to all the accredited NGOs in order to have a complete picture of their expertise. One-to-one interviews have been conducted by Zoom or by telephone with the NGOs from all of the underrepresented regions (Africa, Arab States, Latin America and Caribbean) as well as underrepresented NGOs in the other regions (Western Europe and North America, Eastern Europe, and Asia-Pacific). These one-to-one interviews are aimed at providing more detailed information about the NGOs expertise, their experiences with the accreditation process and their needs for capacity building. Preliminary results of this project will be presented at the meeting of the Forum during the Intergovernmental Committee Meeting in December. The final report is to be completed and delivered at the end of December 2021.

ECHOS Project on Museums and ICH

The Steering Committee accepted an invitation to support the ECHOES - “*Eco-museums and museums as Communities for Heritage resilience, Openness, and Economic Sustainability*” - project in its application for a HORIZON grant from the European Union. The proposal is being presented by Valentina Zingari from the SIMBDEA (Italian Society for Museum and Heritage Anthropology), an accredited NGO. It will contribute to the promotion and enhancement of innovative management and financing practices, policies and strategies of museums and eco-museums across Europe with the objectives of fostering sustainability, inclusiveness and long-term resilience of these cultural institutions. The project aims at developing a theoretical framework and a set of toolkits that will be tested on a selected number of partner cultural institutions.

The ICH NGO Forum has given its support to the ECHOES project by providing feedback on the project’s outputs, supporting the creation of the Pan-European Network of cultural resilience practices and institutions, supporting the research activities by providing contact with scientific advisors and by helping the identification of suitable case studies, engaging with the project’s partners on a regular basis and looking closely at the manifesto and toolkits that will result from the research study. This could provide a model for similar projects in other regions of the world. We hope that this application is accepted and look forward to collaborating with ECHOES in the near future.

III. Future Advisory Functions and Activities of the ICH NGO Forum

The Forum is expanding its advisory capacities in response to the mutual growing interest expressed by the IGC and the Secretariat. It is developing its organizational capacity to meet the needs and the requirements for the sustainable implementation of the 2003 Convention. In line with this firm commitment, the forum is developing and outlining the components for a sustainable Plan of Action that speaks to how our organization will face the challenges of its emerging roles and accountability to the Convention.

Participants in the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group meeting in September 2021 engaged in extended discussion about how the Forum might contribute to the evaluation of files. The Forum recognizes that States Parties are under increasing pressure, including from bearer communities, to nominate more elements for inscription to the Urgent Safeguarding and Representative lists. Increasing the number of files could encourage communities to better recognise and safeguard their heritage and enhance the commitments of States Parties towards this objective. In addition, multinational nominations provide the opportunity for bearer communities whose elements lie across national borders to cooperate over safeguarding these elements, as well as for sharing experiences and expertise at various levels. However, interest in increasing the number of nominations runs up against the capacity of an under resourced Living Heritage Entity to administer an ever-increasing number of files as well as the capacity of the Evaluation Body to fully evaluate nominations and interact with the nominating entities as the number of nominations increase. These limitations are financial, institutional and operational.

The Forum is willing to work as an active partner with, and complement the efforts of, the Committee, Evaluation Body and the Secretariat to ensure that any potential reshaping of the evaluation process, including amending criteria, requirements, procedures and interactions with nominating entities will be in line with the core purposes of the Convention. This might entail simplifying evaluation criteria,

involving NGOs in the evaluation of files and interaction with nominating entities and changes to the composition of the Evaluation Body as well as its working mechanisms. The Forum is uniquely positioned to contribute to the evaluation of files, given the aggregate safeguarding expertise of its members and remarkably extensive knowledge of ICH worldwide, grounded in its work with an extraordinarily diverse array of communities.

While the specific mechanisms for its involvement in the evaluation process are yet to be determined, the Forum is prepared to draw from the expertise of its members about on the ground ICH practices, community engagement and best safeguarding practices across every UNESCO region. Participation in the evaluation process will provide an excellent opportunity for shared-responsibility and participatory involvement of all of our members in the work of the Forum. We are able to create platforms that will enable NGOs to provide their assessments, working in joint collaboration with the Evaluation Body to set criteria for NGO input, following from their needs for the assessment of particular files.

The current survey of the expertise of accredited NGOs will provide a database that will be used to determine which of our members possess the necessary expertise to assess specific files. This survey is the first Forum initiative carried out in association with the Secretariat. It is demonstrating how the Forum is able to complement the resources of the Secretariat and establish an efficient, ongoing working relationship that will set the pattern for future projects. The Forum is ready and willing to perform additional advisory functions. Capacity building programmes undertaken by the Forum could be conducted by members from each region to develop the inventorying, safeguarding and organizational abilities of communities, NGOs not yet accredited to the Convention and other formal and non-formal stakeholders. Context analysis based upon empirical research on the social and environmental impacts of inscriptions and safeguarding plans along with delineation of best practices for safeguarding could be carried out in a timely, cost-effective manner. The results of this research would be disseminated to all ICH stakeholders. Building upon the work of its new working group concerned with increasing the number of accredited NGOs in underrepresented regions, initiatives to instruct and inform non-accredited NGOs about the Convention and the accreditation process could be undertaken by NGOs within their own regions. These new advisory functions would be carried out through dialogue and collaboration with States Parties and the Living Heritage Entity as well as with communities, groups, individuals and other non-state actors. Any new advisory functions to be undertaken by NGOs should be clearly defined and stated in the Operational Directives.

Expanded advisory functions will present new challenges to the Forum's organizational capacity and structures. In order to meet these challenges, the Forum is prepared to undertake strategic planning to prioritize the advisory functions that it will undertake within a specified time frame, delineate how it could carry out its new advisory functions and develop its organizational structures in order to expand its capacity to undertake these activities. At some point in the near future, it is likely that paid staff would need to be hired, staffing structures established and configurations for relationships between the staff and the Steering Committee established. Working groups will be more substantially and extensively involved with Forum activities and respond more closely to priorities for implementing the Convention. Guidelines for working group elections, leadership succession and relationships with the Steering Committee now being constructed will be of considerable value as the working groups become more active and productive. Obviously, the Forum will need to establish an adequate funding base to support the new activities, staffing and other organizational needs. This should include

dedicated ongoing funding from the Living Heritage Entity and additional support for particular initiatives from funds donated by States Parties along with other possible sources such as private foundations and donors.

As advisory functions expand, the Forum should have new opportunities to communicate with the Committee and States Parties, including additional opportunities for speaking at intergovernmental meetings. Currently many State Party delegates attend sessions of the Forum during the week of the annual Committee sessions. New opportunities will be provided for inclusion of State Party delegates in these sessions.

In memory of Albert van der Zeijden (1957-2021)

We wish to conclude by paying tribute to our most valued and esteemed colleague Albert van der Zeijden who sadly and most unexpectedly passed away in July. Albert headed up the ICH and research working group for a number of years and made a great contribution to the work of the ICH NGO Forum. He made extraordinary contributions to the understanding and furthering of ICH in the Netherlands and worldwide, and he is greatly missed.

ICH NGO Forum Steering Committee